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THE PURPOSE OF THIS MAGAZINE

THE PALIMPSEST, issued monthly by the State Historical Society of Iowa, is devoted to the dissemination of Iowa History. Supplementing the other publications of this Society, it aims to present the materials of Iowa History in a form that is attractive and a style that is popular in the best sense—to the end that the story of our Commonwealth may be more widely read and cherished.

BENJ. F. SHAMBAUGH
Superintendent

THE MEANING OF PALIMPSESTS

In early times palimpsests were parchments or other materials from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the records of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY JOHN ELY BRIGGS

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The Hobo Convention

Judge and hobo, tramps and lawyers,
Legislators, Weary Willies,
Priest and pirate, saint and sinner,
Bankers, beggars, correspondents,
Printers, tailors, every nation
Called they in this grand convention,
Gave the freedom of the city,
And the people yelled with laughter,
When they saw the aggregation.

It was during the depression of 1896 that a group of young men in Illinois conceived the idea of forming a tramps' union in order to protect themselves against alleged incursions of organized labor. This band of Illinois "tramps" formed a State union, and the idea soon became popular all over the country. Presently a national union was effected.

Having formulated a set of by-laws, the professed hobos devised for themselves a tourist union button,

advertised the tourists' union as an association of tramps for mutual benefit and improvement, and charged an admission fee of twenty cents for a button. The only qualification for membership was the willingness of applicants to panhandle a dookie — that is, beg a hand-out at the back door from some maid or housewife. The tourist must prefer to ride on a brake beam rather than in a palace coach, and had to promise to petition the Congressman from his district to pass a law requiring steam heat in box cars. Conclaves were held annually, the bums taking free passage to the appointed town, and there, holding high carnival with plenty of eatables and drinkables, they forgot all their woes in the enjoyment of one holiday a year.

The origin of the hobo convention which was held at Britt, Iowa, on August 22, 1900, came about through an article that appeared in the Chicago *Record*. In the spring of that year, T. A. Potter, who was at that time a prominent business man of Britt, noticed that a number of tramps had held a meeting at Danville, Illinois. In fact, four hundred and seventy-eight "actual, genuine, tattooed-on-the-arm, and blown-in-the-bottle tramps" had been present. Out of curiosity, Mr. Potter addressed a letter to Mr. Roberts of Burlington, a State representative of the tramp union, asking for further details concerning the hobo organization.

Several months passed, during which time Mr. Potter really forgot all about the hobos and their gather-

ings. And then, one day he received a letter from Roberts, enclosing a blank application and a tourist union button. Proudly placing the button on the lapel of his coat, Mr. Potter became Britt's first member of the "Order of the Honorary Sons of Rest". Naturally, the button attracted interest, and the new member commenced to receive numerous inquiries as to what sort of society "Tourist Union No. 63" was.

Mr. Potter also wrote to Charles F. Noe, of Sycamore, Illinois, whom he found to be the secretary of the organization, and asked for application blanks. Mr. Noe was a newspaper man, the editor of the Sycamore *Democrat*. In fact, Mr. Potter discovered that the organization of professional tourists had originated with members of different typographical unions, printers, and men connected with the newspaper business. But the organization had expanded, and by the year 1900, "scads and scores" of would-be hobos had become members of "Tourist Union No. 63". In addition to the bona fide hobo members, the honorary members at that time numbered fifteen hundred and included representatives of many businesses and no business at all, from newspaper slavery to bond-clipping luxury. Shriners and Elks turned hobo. Prominent men from

THE BUTTON

all over the State and nation became technical tramps.

The membership of the organization grew rapidly in Britt until many prominent men of the town were enlisted. Among the number was Thomas A. Way, who was then well known both on account of his business activities and his connection with politics; W. E. Bradford, a pioneer attorney; B. C. Way, then in the drug business at Britt; Phil Reed, who was in the newspaper and grain business; William Dana, a real estate dealer; and others in Britt and the vicinity.

After the discovery of the origin of the organization, E. N. Bailey, editor of the Britt *Tribune,* took a decided interest in the tramp union and, with his cooperation, "Trume" Potter became "the originator, the instigator, the initiator, the accelerator, the innovator and the head exasperator" of the hobo convention. The two men — Potter and Bailey — made a proposal to Big Brother Charles F. Noe that the town of Britt would like to play host to a national convention for the professional do-nothings, agreeing to supply a car load of beer for each five hundred hobos or fraction thereof, and to feed every man for two whole days. Mr. Noe visited Britt with "Onion" Cotton, the "Head Pipe" of the organization, and August 22, 1900, was decided upon as the date for the national hobo convention. The sponsors claimed that it was the first national convention ever held in Iowa.

Experienced bums, itinerant printers, bindlestiffs,

nestocrats, and society tramps were invited. Word was received from almost every State in the country that the professional tourists were heading toward Britt, Iowa. And Britt, a hitherto unknown little town of the Middle West, became in certain circles the Mecca of the whole United States.

According to the grand officers of the organization, Britt was chosen as the point of the national convention because the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad and the Minneapolis and St. Louis Railroad with their numerous freight trains gave ready access to the town from the effete east, the frozen north, the torrid south, and the wild and wooly west; because the soil for a hundred miles around was black and springy to the step and the walking delegates arriving by the country roads would not get footsore, and no sand would sift into their shoes.

During the interval after Britt had been selected as the convention headquarters and before the designated date of the meeting, the newspapers throughout the entire country exploited the unique affair. Responsibility for the publicity of the convention rested mainly upon E. N. Bailey, a chubby man of keen wit and good humor, who wrote many of the most sarcastic and penetrating epigrams of Iowa journalism during that period.

With large numbers of society tramps and hobos sending in requests for hotel reservations, the housing

question became a real problem. The first thought was to ask the superintendents of the railroads to set out at the junction about fifty empty box cars. Later, this idea was abandoned in favor of using the buildings at the fair grounds, the horse stalls being provided with fresh straw as beds for the Weary Willies.

If it was advertising that Britt wanted, the town got a full measure of that kind of devotion. About two days before the convention, a number of newspaper men arrived in Britt. In fact, there were sixteen special newspaper correspondents at Britt on the day of the convention. Among the reporters sent for the occasion were: Richard Henry Little of the Chicago *Tribune,* James J. Raferty of the Chicago *Record,* Met L. Saley of the Chicago *Inter Ocean,* Byron Williams of the Minneapolis *Journal,* E. H. Robb of the St. Louis *Globe-Democrat,* Grant Tyler of the Iowa *State Register,* and T. G. Morehead who represented the Des Moines *Capital* and also prepared special articles concerning the convention for the Sunday editions of the Chicago *Times-Herald,* the St. Paul *Pioneer Press,* the Omaha *Bee,* and the St. Louis *Post-Dispatch.*

James J. Raferty, of the Chicago *Record,* was arrested the day before the convention on the charge of being guilty of taking a bath. As this was highly against both the constitution and by-laws of the organization, he was tried and fined, but the evidence showed that it was only a bath of the corkscrew variety,

and he was let off after furnishing a bath of the same sort for the Court. Richard Henry Little was one of the prosecuting attorneys of the famous trial.

On account of all the publicity, several politicians of the State were attracted to Britt. A number of ministers also came to view the convention, and detectives were sent by several detective agencies for the purpose of picking up criminals who might be present in the crowd.

The greatest joke about the national convention of hobos was the seriousness with which both Britt and the bums regarded the whole affair. Almost two days before the convention, the tramps began to arrive. When they discovered that the citizens of Britt were going to treat them right, they organized scouts along the railways to direct the hobos to the fair grounds. By Tuesday evening — the night before the big day of the convention — bums and tramps were arriving from every part of the country, and every train of the Milwaukee and the Minneapolis and St. Louis railways was dumping its cargo of nondescript humanity out of box cars, off the platforms of the blind baggage, and from the brake beams of the trucks. It mattered little how they got there, "whether on cushions or by the highway, whether astride the bumpers or the bicycle, or yet by way of the rude raft launched on the bosom of the creek." All were there and "all were hungry". On Tuesday evening there were fifty hobos

in Britt by actual count, and for the first time in many years the residents of the little town locked their doors and hid the family silverware in mattresses. It was impossible to purchase a padlock for love or money in Britt the night before the convention.

The town had been appropriately decorated for the convention with banners, tin cans, and other articles suitable to the occasion. A streamer indicating the place of headquarters was stretched across the street from the Way-Healey building, while across the Bailey newspaper office was a banner announcing the location of "Tourist Hindquarters". All day Tuesday the society tramps and genuine hobos straggled into the town of Britt, where they were given a chance to panhandle the merchants of the town. The delegations of hobos were not pretty. They regarded themselves as the guests of Britt and proceeded to demand entertainment, food, and drink. Their national cry was, "Give us chuck and suds and we're happy."

By Tuesday, "Trume" Potter began to realize that the convention was a serious business. Before noon, sixty tramps had wandered into his velvet-carpeted office, asking, "Where do we feed? Where's the suds?" Every hobo demanded attention — and he got it. The delegates were taken to the fair grounds where they were given commodious quarters in the hog and cattle pens. And there they fed and boozed, lolled and lazied, enjoying two days of luxury.

The jargon of the hobos included many expressions peculiar to their cult. For instance, a "nestocrat" is a man who sleeps anywhere, a "tourist" is a man who can travel without money, the "gay cat" is the man who has charge of the camp fire and directs others in begging from the housewives throughout the village where the hobos are camping, a "bindlestiff" is a man who can cook anywhere.

On the morning of August 22nd, a sleeper on a Chicago train was set out and a party of hobo officials filed out. The president, "Onion" Cotton, and the secretary, Charlie Noe, had organized the party, chartered a car, and decorated it with appropriate banners. Accompanied by the Clear Lake band and a large crowd of the fraternity gathered en route, the Chicago delegation made a most spectacular arrival in Britt. They were escorted to headquarters by the reception committee, the Britt cornet band, and Bailey's "rag time" band. Before leaving Chicago, each member of the party had sealed his shoe laces and a wager had been made that whoever broke his shoe laces while on the trip (which meant that no one would take off his shoes during the whole time) would be penalized. And so, in the true hobo style, the Grand Ashayhis of the hobo convention lived for two days.

The Chicago party spent one night in Britt, and slept in Gifford's livery barn. About two o'clock in the morning, Mr. Potter was awakened by Mr. Noe,

who complained that the horses below snored so loudly that the peaceful sleep of the society tramps in the loft above was greatly disturbed. He wished the horses could be quieted.

It was a strange gathering that assembled at the fair grounds on the morning of the convention — "authors, railroaders, cigarmakers, designers, real estaters, printers, actors, doctors, society tramps" — they were all there and ready for a big celebration. Prominent men and the genuine hobos sat side by side, and drank beer and soup out of the same old tomato can. With the real hobos it was the chance for a day of much eating and more drinking, a chance to own a town, even if it were small. With the pretenders, it was a lark as enjoyable as those of past college days when sense gave way to nonsense.

About two hundred and fifty hobos attended the convention. They were all orderly and immediately organized themselves at the fair grounds by appointing one of their number as the chairman of a committee in charge of affairs. The chairman of the hobos was a college man, who proved himself well educated by delivering an excellent address before the convention. To this day, the identity of the collegiate tramp is unknown.

It was the chairman's duty to make out an order for provisions, which the committee in charge furnished. The tramps then cooked their meals in the same man-

ner that they did along the railroad right of way or on the bank of a stream. Large numbers of people came to watch these culinary activities of the hobos.

A side degree was organized by Attorney Bradford of Britt, in connection with the association proper, which was termed "The Sons of the Blue Rhinoceros". One of the tenets of this degree was the stipulation that every tourist must register on the white planks of the railroad property in an accessible place so that his message might be readily deciphered by tourists going through and slipping off passenger and freight trains. In this way the tramps would be able to keep track of each other, and to know in which direction their friends were travelling.

Weather conditions on the day of the convention were ideal, which was fortunate, for the program included horse races, ball games, foot races, and egg sucking contests. The special features of the day transpired at the fair grounds in the afternoon, opening with an address of welcome by Attorney Bradford and responses by Head Pipe "Onion" Cotton and Charles F. Noe. According to an article in the Britt *Tribune* for August 22, 1900, "both men declared that they were no speakers and their remarks proved that their declaration was no lie." The main speech of the day was given by W. L. Eaton of Osage.

The "rag time" band — or the "Tramp Drum Corps", as it was generally known — attracted a great

deal of attention, playing on the streets and at the fair grounds. The entire drum corps dressed as tramps was one of the most striking features of the convention.

Interest in the races was stimulated tremendously by the variety of enticing prizes offered to the winners. Awards for the foot race were as follows: first prize, one bottle Pabst tonic; second prize, cash $2.00; third prize, cash $1.50; fourth prize, cash $1.00; fifth prize, cash 75 cents; sixth prize, one can of tomatoes; seventh prize, two pounds of cheese; eighth prize, one bottle of Hunyadi water; ninth prize, one ticket (on cushions) from Hayfield to Titonka; tenth prize, introduction to Bill Dana; eleventh prize, one cake of Ivory soap; twelfth prize, photograph of Phil Reed; and thirteenth prize, three days of work.

No doubt the races and athletic events proved most delightful to those who took delight in watching others work. The program closed with a grand farewell banquet for hobos only, at which time all restraint was removed and the town was wide open, presumably so that there might be no congestion of exits.

Throughout the convention, political talk was prevalent, the hobos having been imbued with the idea that they should take a hand in the presidential campaign and place a candidate in nomination. A good deal of opposition was expressed to McKinley because he "believed in giving work to every man." Just about this time Admiral Dewey had returned from the

Philippines and the convention voted to a man for the nomination of the hero of Manila. The prevailing sentiment in favor of Dewey was pithily expressed by Nebuchadnezzar Lloyd of Utah.

"Dewey is our logical candidate for many reasons", he said. "In the first place he has been thrown down and roasted by all the other parties. From the day he sailed he wanted to be President. Naturally we know how he feels. Then he is one of us, because he never had but one home and he gave that away. He believes in free trade, imperialism, silver, gold, and everything else that is repudiated by the other parties. He's our choice."

Immediately upon his nomination, Admiral Dewey was notified and informed that a nominating committee would call upon him and present credentials. The Minneapolis *Journal* published a cartoon showing the nomination committee travelling to Washington in a box car, and later another cartoon appeared illustrating the presentation of the nomination to Dewey, in which Dewey stood on top of a pyramid of beer kegs and received his nomination papers.

For Vice President, the convention nominated "Filipino Joe" Bazill who had been in the Philippines as a soldier, and at the time of the convention was riding about the country doing nothing except expressing his opinions of the Philippines.

After being in secret session nearly all day under

the water tank, the platform committee agreed upon the following planks:

1. We are in favor of legislation for the establishment of rocking chairs on all brakebeams on all railway cars and coaches.
2. All bulldogs shall be muzzled and any dog swallowing his muzzle and biting a tourist shall be shot.
3. Any housewife offering a hobo her own making of mince pie shall be declared guilty of treason and be punished accordingly.
4. All cushions and bumpers to blind baggage must be cushioned and upholstered.
5. The word "bath" must be expunged from the dictionary and any person caught bathing shall be tarred and feathered.
6. We believe in the free and unlimited distribution of beer without waiting for the aid or consent of any of the breweries.
7. No blanket stiff who squares it will be allowed to hit the road a second time.
8. We are opposed to all foreign wars, as the loading of transports necessitates too much work.

At the election of national officers, "Onion" Cotton was reëlected Head Pipe, Charles F. Noe, Secretary, and T. A. Potter, Chief Route Picker. Noe encountered considerable opposition from Martin Johnson who accused Noe of being caught at work during the past year. Noe retorted that Johnson had taken two baths since the first of July. To this slander, Johnson replied that Noe, "like the rammed petard, is only waiting for ignition to explode, so swelled is he over

the honors already heaped upon him." Moreover, he was even then wearing socks which, having been thrown against the wall, failed to stick and were therefore unfit for any member of the association. Noe explained, however, that the only reason he wore socks at all was because "turning the hose on his feet kept him cool those sultry evenings."

On the day of the convention, several telegrams were alleged to have been received from various cities throughout the United States, requesting the ordeal of entertaining the next convention. A rule was made, however, to the effect that there should be no more than one national hobo convention.

Toward evening on the last day of the convention, the people of Britt became rather worried for fear that the 'bos might tarry after the conclave had been formally closed. Noe, however, said "no", and his word commanded respect. Not more than four or five hobos remained on the following day.

There were probably five or six thousand people in attendance at the convention on August 22nd, though the crowd has been estimated as large as 20,000. Seldom has a more cosmopolitan throng ever assembled in an Iowa town than when "a general conglomeration of the human family got together" in Britt.

The national hobo convention occurred over thirty years ago, but a remnant of the organization still exists. Until the time of his tragic death in a fire on

March 6, 1931, T. A. Potter of Mason City occasionally received letters asking about the convention and requesting cards and buttons.

It is doubtful if a more hilarious farce was ever perpetrated than the national convention of "Tourist Union No. 63". Even the celebrated hoax of the Cardiff Giant of Fort Dodge did not receive as much newspaper notoriety as Britt gained through the monumental joke of the hobo convention.

That was more than a quarter of a century ago. To-day Britt is still a little town somewhere in the north-central part of Iowa. The people remember the hobo convention and rank it first in the history of the town, second only to the distinction of being the residence of Governor Hammill. As the motorist enters Britt he may read these signs beside the road:

THIS TOWN IS FAMOUS FOR
THE HOBO CONVENTION
THE HOME OF THE GOVERNOR

GRETCHEN CARLSON

Ian Maclaren

During the decade from 1890 to 1900, there was no more popular lecturer and writer in America than John Watson, whose published works appeared under the nom de plume, "Ian Maclaren", Ian being the Gaelic for John and Maclaren the family name of his mother. In the domain of literature Ian Maclaren is recognized as one of the best interpreters of Scotch life and character. A typical Scotch Highlander, born at Manningtree on November 3, 1850, he was educated at Edinburgh and at Tübingen and became a minister of the Free Church, holding several important pastorates including the Sefton Park Presbyterian Church in Liverpool.

His earliest literary work, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush* (1894), brought him instant fame. The book was widely read and much discussed, both in his own country and in America. It passed through many editions totaling upwards of several hundred thousand copies. *The Days of Auld Lang Syne* and *A Doctor of the Old School* appeared the following year, and were received with the same popular acclaim. In all, Maclaren published more than a score of volumes of varying degrees of excellence, but after 1896 his fame rested chiefly upon his genius as a public speaker, rather than upon his literary ability.

Upon his first triumphant tour of the United States between October 1 and December 16, 1896, his American manager, Major J. B. Pond, declared that he "saw more happy faces while accompanying him than any other man was ever privileged to see in the same length of time. During this period Dr. Watson had ninety-six" audiences all as large as could be "crowded into the largest public halls in the principal cities of the United States and Canada." With "intermingled laughter and tears, like sunshine making the rain radiant", they listened spellbound.

According to Major Pond, John Watson was at that time a "tall, straight, square-shouldered, deep-chested man of middle age, with a large, compact, round, and well-balanced head, thinly thatched with brown and greyish hair, well-moulded refined features that bear the impress of kindly shrewdness, intellectual sagacity, and spiritual clearness, tempered, too, with a mingled sense of keen humour and grave dignity." Mrs. Watson, a "frail, little body, with black hair and eyes", the mother of his four sons, accompanied him throughout his American tours, at times, even, when the exertion taxed her strength to the utmost, amounting to little short of hardship.

It is probable that Watson would never have been more than the pastor of a well-to-do congregation in Liverpool had it not been for the influence of one man. For many years he had been intimately acquainted

with Robertson Nicoll, the editor of the *British Weekly* and *The Bookman*. Nicoll, who had a keen appreciation of literary ability, discovered latent qualities of genius in the Scottish minister, which he determined should be developed. His success was even greater than he had anticipated and events leading up to Dr. Watson's first American tour moved with phenomenal rapidity.

The immediate occasion of this first visit in 1896 was an invitation to deliver the Lyman Beecher Lectures on Preaching at Yale, whereupon the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him. These lectures were published under the title of *The Cure of Souls*. This task being fulfilled he was free to undertake his lecture tour under the direction of Major Pond, thus combining a business venture, which proved to be profitable beyond all expectations, with his thoroughly enjoyable tour of America. Shall we say that this was a bit of shrewd business sagacity?

Dr. Watson's introduction to the American public at large occurred upon the evening of October 12th, when he lectured before an audience at the Academy of Music in Brooklyn. Thence his itinerary took him on a circuitous route through many of the leading cities of eastern United States and Canada into the Middle West where he lectured at Chicago, Madison, Minneapolis, Des Moines, Galesburg, and other places.

In Minneapolis, Mrs. Watson fell ill with a severe

cold and he went on to Des Moines alone. The weather was extremely disagreeable, though the sleeping car was fairly comfortable. During the day a cold, sleety rain developed, which later changed to a gale "so severe as to impede the progress of the train", much to the astonishment and irritation of the Doctor.

All day he "travelled over the boundless prairie, thickly dotted with frail frame houses that appeared hardly able to withstand the gale." This was his first view of real prairie country, "and it was a great surprise to him." There was no dining car on the train and no lunchrooms along the line, so that he was compelled to go without food all day. Moreover, the train continually lost time, until Dr. Watson feared that he would have to lecture without his supper.

It was after eight o'clock on October 30th when he arrived at the hotel in Des Moines, and the clerk informed him that the dining room had just closed for the evening. But the Doctor hurried to the dining room and made a loud noise on the door, which was opened by "a man in an evening dress" who proved to be the head waiter.

"I want some food immediately", said Dr. Watson. The man stood as though paralyzed.

"I must have some food right away", the Doctor repeated, and rushed by the man to a table where the remains of the dinner of the last comers had not yet been removed. Hastily he began to eat while the head

waiter attempted to stop him. But Dr. Watson kept right on. He managed to get part of a meal, and hurried out with the waiter still expostulating at his heels.

It was almost nine o'clock when he arrived at Foster's Opera House, according to the Des Moines *Leader*. "At five minutes before nine o'clock the lecturer came around the flies. During the long wait the audience was entertained with a violin solo and a piano solo. An impromptu choir on the stage started 'America', and four verses were sung. Then came 'Annie Laurie', and it was during the singing of that that Dr. Watson took his seat. 'How appropriate', every one said to his neighbor, and the tedium of the long delay was forgotten. It was a gathering of which any person might be proud, and evinced extraordinary interest concerning the new star in the literary firmament, unknown except in his clerical capacity two years ago."

The president of the Woman's Club, under whose auspices the lecture was given, introduced the speaker with a very few words of eulogy. "The long-anticipated hour has come", she said, and Dr. Watson stood up before the audience. No one could convey a reproach so delicately as a woman, he declared. When he heard the words, "long-anticipated hour" combined with what was complimentary, it reminded him of his childhood days when medicine was administered in

sweets. "Only the other day", he continued, "I was congratulating myself on never being late, either for pulpit or platform, but now the boast has come home to me, as such things usually do."

For two hours that "seemed like so many minutes" he spoke "easily, simply, effectively" to a "large and highly entertained audience" on the subject of "Some Scottish Traits". His "strong individuality as a great and eloquent Nonconformist preacher was merged into his character as the delightful but virile Scotch story teller." After the lecture he read some selections from *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*. The audience was so charmed by the story that at the end every one sat perfectly silent and the Doctor, much moved by such a tribute, pronounced a benediction.

At eleven-thirty the lecturer was again aboard the train en route to Galesburg. At eight the next morning he arrived at Rock Island where he was compelled to "lay over" until two-forty in the afternoon. Nevertheless the pause proved to be a delightful wait. He and Major Pond "took a carriage and drove about the town, visiting the United States Arsenal, where arms and war equipments are manufactured. Through the politeness of the commanding officer Colonel Buffington, Dr. Watson was most graciously entertained all the forenoon."

John Finley, President of Knox College, accompanied the guest of the College from Rock Island in

the private car of the superintendent of the railroad. At Galesburg they were met by the college students, both "male and female", who turned out en masse to meet Ian Maclaren at the station. Behind a band and surrounded by students, their "carriage was escorted to President Finley's house." At the lecture that evening, which was to help establish a fund for the Abraham Lincoln Memorial to Art and Science, he was greeted with a typical western college yell "given with a vigor that could not be excelled for volume." It was one of the most hearty receptions he had in America.

From Galesburg Dr. Watson's route continued eastward, his popularity all the while increasing until by the time he reached Washington he was fairly lionized. At the capital he was the guest of President and Mrs. Cleveland at a luncheon attended also by the Secretary of State and others. "The President engaged seats for himself and his family, and the entire party attended Dr. Watson's lecture that evening."

On Wednesday, December 16th, at noon, Dr. and Mrs. Watson sailed for home on the *Majestic,* after refusing an offer of $24,000 for twelve additional weeks of lecturing. The profits of his tour had exceeded $35,000, for a period of ten weeks. Both he and Mrs. Watson appeared little the worse for their strenuous experience in America, despite the fact that a friend in Liverpool had cautioned that "Watson,

poor fellow, is not strong. He has had severe hemorrhages." On the contrary, he impressed Major Pond as being athletic, "with the power of endurance of a gladiator".

He returned to America for a second tour, again under the direction of Major Pond, beginning on February 19th and ending in May, 1899. His itinerary on this occasion, mainly in the Far West, up and down the Pacific Coast, was accomplished with much the same success as before. The only extraordinary incident was his narrow escape from injury in a bad train wreck in western Kansas.

Upon his return to England, ill health overtook him and during the winter of 1901 he sojourned in Egypt with the hope of recuperation. His old time vigor and strength was not regained, however, and eventually he was compelled to relinquish his pastorate in Liverpool, as his ministerial duties, coupled with the large amount of time he was devoting to lecturing and writing, proved too arduous for his failing health. In January, 1907, he accepted, on what proved to be the eve of his death, the presidency of the National Free Church Council, and was nominated for the Principalship of Westminster College, Cambridge, in succession to Dr. Oswald Dykes.

On January 30, 1907, at the invitation of the Western Theological Seminary at Pittsburgh, Dr. and Mrs. Watson once more set sail for New York, this time

aboard the *Baltic,* to undertake a third lecture tour of America. At farewell time, the home folks were unusually solicitous as to Dr. Watson's welfare. To some of his fellow passengers it appeared as though he was suffering from exhaustion and strain, while to others he seemed as buoyant as ever. Upon arriving in this country his time was not entirely booked, and he accepted many additional pulpit and platform invitations, much to the anxiety of his friends.

Besides lecturing in Boston, New York, and Pittsburgh, he delivered a course of lectures on the "Religious Condition of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century" at Haverford College, and accepted an invitation to deliver the Cole Lectures of Vanderbilt University at Nashville. Thereafter he filled various engagements throughout the East before undertaking a tour into Canada toward the close of March, travelling as far west as Winnipeg, thence into Montana, North Dakota, and Iowa on what proved to be an exceptionally tedious and arduous journey.

While crossing the western plains he became ill with what seemed to be an ordinary sore throat. His indisposition did not prevent him, however, from proceeding to Valley City, North Dakota, where he was booked for his next lecture. Although not well when he arrived he exhibited his usual equanimity and patience. On reaching the hotel he found that no room had been reserved for him and that the place

was full to overflowing. Finally he found lodging in the hospitable home of William McKinney. In relating his experience to his friends he explained, "Why the clerk just said, 'You see, we don't take in tramps here. You're not in our class at all.' "

On Saturday evening, April 20th, he lectured, and on Sunday he preached at a union service held in the Armory Opera House. Jacob was the topic for his discourse, and his remarks made a very deep impression. This was the last sermon he ever preached.

Dr. Watson's next appearance was to have been the final number of the college lecture course at Iowa Wesleyan University. On the evening of April 22nd, Professor E. E. Lymer, the faculty member of the lecture course committee, received a message requesting him to meet the lecturer at the midnight train. Upon his arrival, Dr. Watson, accompanied by Mrs. Watson, was taken at once to the Brazelton Hotel. He appeared to be very ill. A physician was called who diagnosed the ailment as an acute attack of tonsilitis. Although the fever was very high, there were apparently no other alarming symptoms. The lecture, which was scheduled for April 23rd, was postponed indefinitely.

At first Dr. Watson seemed to improve, but later quinsy and other complications developed. He was informed that he should do nothing for at least three weeks. Although he suffered greatly from insomnia,

he cherished the hope that he might still recover sufficient strength to continue with his tour. He was especially concerned about the lectures at Nashville.

On May 3rd Mrs. Watson wrote: "This loathsome catarrh is now slowly departing by way of the ears. All this leaves him very weak. He is only now sitting up in his room for a few hours." His progress was but temporary, however, and his condition continually alternated between better and worse. Every possible attention was given him. The kindly townsfolk were deeply solicitous of the welfare of their distinguished guest, rendering freely such comfort or assistance as was within their power. Due to his condition, few visitors were permitted, aside from Dr. Lymer and Judge James D. Smyth who was presiding over the district court and staying at the hotel during the time. The Judge was especially attentive and a strong friendship sprang up between the two men.

On Sunday he again seemed better, "though swelling of the limbs and rheumatic pains indicated that the blood was becoming infected." That day he received a message from Andrew Carnegie, and in the evening he dictated a reply: "Thanks for your inquiry." This was his last message. He soon fell into a deep sleep. Toward morning he spoke once or twice to his physician and then passed into a coma from which he never regained consciousness. When the doctor returned Monday morning he perceived at once that the crisis

was at hand, and two other physicians were hastily summoned. It was too late, however, and at a quarter past eleven o'clock on May 6, 1907, John Watson, the noted Scotch divine, died in the presence of his wife, who had been his constant companion. Though he was more than three thousand miles from home, he could not have died in a more friendly community.

The startling news of the death of Ian Maclaren travelled quickly throughout the college community, and indeed almost as quickly throughout the entire English-speaking world. It would be impossible to describe adequately the universal sorrow caused by his passing, and volumes might be filled with the tributes from the pulpit and the press. Particularly keen was this sorrow at Mount Pleasant. While the body lay in state, many of the students and citizens passed silently by the casket to gaze upon the face of him whom they had known but had not heard.

Simple but impressive memorial services were held by the faculty and students at the regular chapel hour on the morning of May 8th, for it was on this day just after midnight that "the Doctor's last journey" was begun. While the train was pulling in, the college bell "told our sadness and sorrow, and that of her who so sore bereft was to make the long journey as the guardian of her beloved dead." The old bell tolled off the years of his life — fifty-seven strokes. His body was placed on the train by men of the Senior Class serving

as pall-bearers while Dr. Lymer quietly handed Mrs. Watson flowers as a token of sympathy from the faculty and students. At the same time a student cornetist from an upper room of the chapel building wherein the Doctor was to have lectured, through opened windows, let float upon the still night air the soothing strains of "Nearer, My God, to Thee."

After the death, Judge Smyth dismissed court so that he might personally look after Mrs. Watson until she reached friends in New York. Sailing from New York on the eleventh, Mrs. Watson arrived in Liverpool without experiencing any untoward event. The community in which Dr. Watson labored for so many years would be satisfied with nothing but a public funeral. The Lord Mayor came forward with the proposal, and his proffered plans were willingly accepted.

It was felt, as Sir Edward Russell said, "that Dr. Watson's death was not merely a personal loss, but that it made a great gap in the social structure." At the funeral which occurred on May 27th a "great and worthy tribute of grief" was paid by the city to the dead minister, and the number of mourners and spectators exceeded sixty thousand. The funeral cortege was accompanied by a regiment of the Liverpool Scottish Volunteers, of whom Dr. Watson was the chaplain, to Smithdown Cemetery, where his remains were laid at rest. A portrait, painted by Robert Morrison

of Liverpool, hangs in the Guild Room of Sefton Park Church.

At Mount Pleasant there yet remains a consciousness of the tragic event. The impression left by the death of so great a soul in that community makes a tradition, especially in college circles, the influence of which is doubtless felt in the lives of many students. The Class of 1907 presented a set of sixteen volumes of Dr. Watson's works to the college library, and during the commencement season in June the Senior Class planted a root of English ivy which grows luxuriantly against the east wall of old Main Hall. At its foot was placed a small marble tablet appropriately inscribed to the memory of Ian Maclaren.

BEN HUR WILSON

Comment by the Editor

TRAMPS

Many boys have planned to be soldiers, explorers, salesmen, or some other kind of hero who goes places and sees things; but whoever heard of a boy who wanted to be a vagabond. A fellow might as well aspire to be a pauper. Somehow tramps never appear in the youthful vision of future greatness. Vagrancy does not commend itself as a career. Maybe that is because most folks are ambitious, while hobos typify indolence. It is natural to build castles, not hovels. Who wants to walk when he might soar?

And yet there are and always have been tramps. Not that they set out to be tramps. Their plight is more circumstantial than achieved. Perhaps vagabondage is a kind of escape from the tedium of steady employment, a natural reaction against the coercion of necessity. Jack London rebelled against hard work and went off with Kelly's army of the idle poor upon a hilarious jaunt across the continent. There is freedom, relaxation, and irresponsibility in the life of the road, a pleasant relief from the restraint, the tension, and the duty of earning a living. The realm of bondage is just across the way from vagabondage and the barrier between is neither broad nor strong in many

places. Now and again the most sedate of men will respond to what is boyish, venturesome, or casual in their nature and take surcease from irksome toil to go where they may watch the human pageant calmly and apart.

It was in the spirit of farce that the hobo convention at Britt was conceived. For a day or two, busy journalists, printers, "tourists", and bums reverted to the irresponsibility of youth and sought amusement in pretense. Like boys at play they banished care in imaginary pseudonymity. Emulation of the traits of tramps not only suited the mood of the make-believe hobos, but provided opportunity to parody the times.

J. E. B.

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